

INTRODUCTION

Design discussions on US93 began in early spring, 2000 and involved committee members representing Montana Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, and the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes. During the course of these discussions, representatives of the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes have emphasized how important maintaining their cultural integrity and the health of their homeland is to the Salish & Kootenai people. Proper functioning of natural processes such as hydrologic function, seed/plant dispersal, and safe movement of wildlife between habitat areas must be maintained. Areas that have been damaged previously as a result of the highway should be enhanced or restored.

This document was originally developed to be a field resource for representatives of MDT, FHWA, CSKT, and their consultants on a field trip to Banff National Park in August, 2000. The intention of the trip was to view crossing structures and meet with wildlife biologists involved with mitigation and monitoring. During the trip, the workbook helped committee members draw a comparison between the location of structures used successfully in Banff with similar habitat and topographic features found along US93. The book proved to be a useful tool for identifying need and feasibility for potential crossings and has been refined to the point where it now provides a detailed outline of the recommended wildlife crossing structures for US 93.

Contents:

- Proposed crossings are discussed individually, in sequence, from south to north. Each page of this book shows a specific structure's location, includes a brief discussion of why the structure is necessary, and gives a description of recommended structure type and size. In addition, the description of each crossing includes recommendations for wildlife fencing adjacent to that particular structure.
- A summary table of all crossings is included. This summary includes the crossing name and assigned number in the workbook, the recommended type and size of crossing, a cost estimate for the structure, and a cost estimate for adjacent fencing.
- "Criteria for locations of crossings" is similar to the criteria used by wildlife experts to locate crossing structures in Banff National Park. Corresponding data for US 93, which was available from the Tribal wildlife management program and Montana DOT, has been included.

This book details mitigation measures that have been discussed and conceptually agreed upon by MDT, FHWA, and CSKT during committee meetings. Recommendations for sizes and types of structures are best estimates for what is anticipated to be successful based on current research. The general approach has been to accommodate the largest and most wary species in the vicinity (in most cases the grizzly) as research has indicated that other species of the ecosystem will readily cross through those structures as well. The fundamental objective of these measures is to ensure proper functioning of natural processes and safe movement of wildlife between habitat areas.

Additional information about the wildlife crossings, fencing, and related topics are addressed in the Design Guidelines and Recommendations for US 93.